

CLAIMS

1. A method of identifying an antigen-responsive T cell within a population of T cells, the method comprising the steps of

5

(1) obtaining a sample containing T cells which have responded to the antigen;

10

(2) determining individually for each of a plurality of specific T cell receptors, or individually for each of a plurality of subsets of T cell receptors, whether expression of a gene encoding a specific T cell receptor, or whether expression of genes encoding a subset of T cell receptors, has increased per specific T cell receptor-positive T cell or per specific T cell receptor-positive T cell subset compared to the expression of said gene or genes in a sample containing T cells which have not responded to the antigen.

15

2. A method according to Claim 1 of identifying an antigen-responsive T cell within a population of T cells, the method comprising the steps of

20

(1) obtaining a sample containing T cells which have responded to the antigen;

25

(2) determining individually for each of a plurality of specific T cell receptors, or individually for each of a plurality of subsets of T cell receptors, the amount of T cell receptor

mRNA, which mRNA is specific for a T cell receptor or is specific for a subset of T cell receptors, per specific ^(A) T cell receptor-positive T cell or per ^(B) specific T cell receptor-positive T cell subset, in the sample obtained in step (1);

5

and

10

(3) determining which T cell receptor mRNA has an increased amount per specific T cell in the sample obtained in step (1) compared to that in a sample containing T cells which have not responded to the antigen.

15

3. A method according to Claim 2 wherein step (1) comprises obtaining (a) a sample containing T cells which have not responded to the antigen and (b) a sample containing T cells which have responded to the antigen and in step (3) it is determined which T cell receptor mRNA has an increased amount per specific T cell in sample (b) compared to sample (a).

20

4. A method according to Claim 3 wherein sample (a) is obtained from a non-diseased site of an individual and sample (b) is obtained from a diseased site of the individual.

25

5. A method according to Claim 3 wherein sample (a) is obtained from a non-diseased individual and sample (b) is obtained from a diseased individual.

Not selected

Selected

6. A method according to any one of Claims 1 to 5 wherein the subset of T cell receptors is a subset wherein each T cell receptor comprises a specific V β region.
Not elected

5 7. A method according to any one of Claims 1 to 5 wherein the subset of T cell receptors is a subset wherein each T cell receptor comprises a specific V α region.
maybe elected

8. A method according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the subset of T cell receptors is a subset wherein each T cell receptor comprises a specific V α and a specific V β region.
10

9. A method according to Claim 8 wherein the subset of T cell receptors is a subset wherein each T cell receptor comprises a specific J region.
15

10. A method according to any one of Claims 2 to 9 wherein the amount of T cell receptor mRNA is determined using quantitative PCR.
20

11. A method according to Claim 10 wherein the quantitative PCR is reverse-transcription-competitive PCR (RT-CPCR).
25

12. A method according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the number of specific T cell receptor-positive T cells or the number of T cell receptor-positive T cells in a specific subset is determined using antibodies which bind to a specific T cell receptor or to a specific subset of T cell receptors.
Not elected

13. A method according to Claim 12 wherein the antibody is an anti-specific V β region antibody. *Method*
14. A method according to Claim 12 wherein the antibody is an anti-specific V α region antibody.
15. A method according to any one of Claims 1 to 11 wherein the number of specific T cell receptor-positive T cells or the number of T cell receptor-positive T cells in a specific subset is determined by quantifying the amount of specific T cell receptor DNA, or the amount of T cell receptor DNA in a specific subset, in the samples obtained in step (1).
16. A method according to Claim 15 wherein the amount of specific DNA is determined using quantitative PCR.
17. A method according to Claim 16 wherein the quantitative PCR is competitive PCR.
18. A method of treating a patient with an antigen-mediated disease the method comprising (a) identifying an antigen-responsive T cell associated with an antigen-mediated disease according to the method of Claim 1 and (b) administering to the patient an effective amount of an agent selected to ameliorate the disease.
19. A method according to Claim 18 wherein the agent reduces or eliminates the T cell response to the antigen.

20. A method according to Claim 18 or 19 wherein the method comprises T cell vaccination or anti-TCR antibody treatment or peptide immunization.